

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
MINUTES

February 9, 2012  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Tanaka, Commissioners Bishop, Jokinen, Lampe, Larrivee, Simas

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Glass

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Jen Benn, Michael Ingram, Eric Miller, Kevin McDonald, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Glass who was excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Project Manager Paul Krawczyk reported that West Lake Sammamish Parkway has been closed since January 22 following a slide. He said the anticipation is that it will take anywhere from six to nine weeks before the road can be reopened. The process of obtaining the easements needed to construct the necessary retaining wall is under way.

Mr. Krawczyk said he had not yet received numbers regarding the traffic volume redistributions since tolling began on SR-520.

Commissioner Jokinen commented that southbound traffic starting around 4:30 p.m. weekdays on 140<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE has become very bad since the tolling went active. Overall mobility is certainly being affected. He said he would encourage the city to take steps internally to help address the increased flow, such as getting the SCAT system up and running as quickly as possible for those arterials.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS – None
6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

8. STUDY SESSION

- A. Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan Update

ADA Coordinator Jen Benn said the ADA law was enacted by Congress and signed into law in 1990, with an effective date of January 26, 1992. The Act has five titles, the second of which applies to cities and which directs jurisdictions to determine ways the disabled can be assured equal access and participation. The Department of Justice has oversight and passes the local oversight responsibilities on to the federal agencies that provide funding to local cities. For Bellevue, the two largest federal funders are Housing and Urban Development and the Federal Highways Administration.

The requirements of Title II include developing a self-evaluation report and then converting it into a transition plan that outlines how each barrier identified will be corrected, the schedule for addressing each barrier, and how each project is to be funded. The law requires cities to identify an ADA coordinator; Bellevue satisfied that requirement by tapping the Director of Human Resources to play the role. The law also requires the establishment of a grievance process, which has been done and which is available on the city's accessibility webpage. Policy support in terms of a Council resolution in support of the ADA has been adopted. The facilities group has begun doing assessments of all public facilities. In 2009 the focus was on community centers and routes of travel to and from City Hall; the work identified improvements totaling some \$230,000 ranging from handrails to appropriate door adjustments and signage in the city's parking garage. The 2012 focus is on ten additional facilities, including public spaces within City Hall and most major park facilities.

Ms. Benn said internally work is under way to identify gaps in staff knowledge and understanding about the law. It has been concluded that additional staff training is required, and that a comprehensive resource on the ADA needs to be compiled for all departments to share. An external review of the city's programs was funded in the last budget but is yet to be conducted.

Ms. Benn said the three most commonly faced issues relative to sidewalk compliance with ADA standards are running slope, cross slope, and level changes or heaving. Nearly every facet of curb ramps must be measured as part of the compliance work.

Commissioner Bishop commented that curb ramps are always complicated by the addition of drainage facilities. Ms. Benn concurred. She said the change in level requirement allows for no more than a quarter inch, but in order to have a gutter accommodating drainage more than a quarter of an inch of a lip is often needed.

The inventory of the city's public pedestrian facilities was conducted very nearly for free through a partnership with the Federal Highway Administration and King County Metro. A segway was tricked out with all manner of measurement equipment and was used to collect some 10,000 data points per running foot throughout the system. One of the challenges for jurisdictions that have hills is meeting the running slope requirements set by the ADA. The law allows for technical infeasibilities. Sidewalks that follow a roadway grade that exceeds the required running slope do not have to be reconstructed to the standard. However, jurisdictions are urged to create periodic pull-outs where people can rest, and where reconstruction is anticipated it should include a plateaued approach. Bellevue has about 95 miles of sidewalk that fall under the technical infeasibility allowance because of the hilly terrain. All technical infeasibilities must, however, be document along with the reason for why they will not be fixed.

Ms. Benn said there is no established process for prioritizing needed fixes. The ADA does require community input and to that end staff have been using a variety of mediums to seek information regarding the challenges faced and what barriers are of greater importance. The information was used to rank the results of the systemwide analysis, with each barrier receiving an activity score focused on the demand for a given facility, and an impedance score focused on the severity of the barrier.

The full report is available online. The work, done primarily by senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz, has received kudos and was recognized as a best practice by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program.

Ms. Benn noted that if every barrier identified through the inventory were to have an average cost applied to it, the improvements would total close to one billion dollars. As many of the fixes as possible will be addressed through the city's standalone CIP projects. Two CIP programs are particularly helpful; they are WB-49, the pedestrian facilities program that receives \$100,000 annually, and the overlay program, of which 15-30% is dedicated annually for curb ramp improvements. Sidewalk barriers are addressed by the city's street maintenance group, though because their funding is limited they give priority to heaves of three-quarters of an inch or greater. Parks and Utilities address issues as part of their projects, and non-city projects done by franchise utilities, private development and partner agencies address barriers as well. Altogether, an average of \$1.1 million is spent annually on ADA improvements in the

public rights-of-way. Going forward, that figure has been used as the logical and reasonable programming number.

Programming the funding in the transition plan has five steps, the first of which involves marking off everything that has been done since the inventory was completed in 2008, namely some 450 curb ramps and portions of approximately 15 block faces. The presumption is that all identified ADA barriers associated with a particular CIP project will be fixed as a part of the project. The reality, however, is that not every barrier will be fixed. Also during the second step, all CIP projects will be programmed along with all community development projects, all non-CIP projects, and any regional partner's projects, all to their years of completion.

One of the biggest expenses related to ADA implementation is mobilization. Thus it makes sense to have some geographic consolidation of construction mobilization. In step three sidewalk maintenance projects will be mobilized by district, with one district targeted each year beginning in 2012.

The fourth step will focus on what the community identified as the greatest barriers. First on their list was heaves of greater than three-quarters of an inch, followed by fixed obstructions and then missing curb ramps. The fifth step will be to refer back to the inventory ranking and program in the priority barriers.

In the citywide transition plan, the program and service element will be able to make the corrections that are largely procedural within the next five years. The Facilities Element corrections to the identified barriers can be expected to be made within ten years, but at \$1.1 million per year the projects in the Transportation Element will take some 900 years to complete. The inventory will be updated regularly, but in programming for the Transportation Element the intent is to be very specific for the first 25 years. For the second 25 years, projects will be programmed in five-year increments. Everything else after that will be programmed into 50-year blocks.

Ms. Benn said there are other issues to be addressed in the transition plan. One is audible pedestrian signals which were not done as part of the original inventory but are required under the accessibility guidelines. There are 66 intersections fitted with the devices on at least one corner, though about 50 of them need improvements to the existing installations to bring them up to standard. The remaining intersections have been prioritized for the installation of audible pedestrian signals going forward, and that will be wrapped into the programming in the transition plan.

Driveway approaches represent the most severe cross slopes for individuals in wheelchairs, and they are among the most expensive cross slope fixes in that they often require changing the grade into private property. A cost for individual driveway cross slope projects has not been developed and therefore has not been prioritized for funding. Individual approaches will be addressed in association with roadway projects where possible, and as requests come in.

Ms. Benn said the internal teams will be looking at the draft transition plan over the next few weeks. The plan will then be put out for public comment as part of an aggressive public engagement process in order to be assured that it implements what the public originally highlighted. Staff will be back before the Council soon with the contracts for the non-transportation efforts. The WB-49 project, the pedestrian facilities program, was increased in the last budget from \$50,000 per year to \$100,000 per year and met its funding allocation in 2011; the project will continue to be used to advance the transition plan.

Commissioner Lampe asked how many complaints are received every year from the public about ADA issues. Ms. Benn said the city receives between 10 and 15 requests for specific projects every year. Official complaints are lodged once every few years.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if the city has an accessibility map showing how to get from one side of the city to the other. Ms. Benn said everything identified in the inventory has been entered into the city's GIS system. One component called the ADA viewer is being updated for conversion to public use and will be able to see where there are fewer barriers. The city does not, however, have a published recommended routing map.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if there have been any studies correlating the use of audible pedestrian signals to creating safer intersections for all pedestrians. Ms. Benn allowed that studies have been done showing benefit for more than just the visually impaired.

Commissioner Jokinen asked if the city collects reports of pedestrians falling on city streets and at intersections. Ms. Benn said staff annually requests from risk management and the street utilities division their trip and fall reports. Every instance is investigated to determine if a fix is warranted.

## B. Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP) Update

Chair Tanaka called attention to the thick packet of materials and noted that it represents the pool of potential candidate projects that will be subject to ranking. He said the study session was intended to allow Commissioners to ask and have answered questions about the candidate projects and other relevant issues.

Senior Transportation Planner Michael Ingram reminded the Commissioners that once the nod has been given, the staff will proceed to evaluate the projects on the list according to the established criteria. He noted that there were 50 staff-identified candidate projects on the list, each of which fits into the following categories. All of the roadway/intersection projects in the current TFP that are not yet completed were on the list. The projects on the previous TFP process were reviewed and three of them were identified as appropriate and relevant to carry forward. One project from the Bel-Red plan not previously captured was added to the list as RI-146. Three projects identified through the Eastgate/I-90 process were added to the list: an

intersection expansion/roundabout at 150<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and Eastgate Way, development of the Snoqualmie River Road on the Bellevue College campus, and widening sidewalks and installing canopies over them on the 142<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SE bridge to improve access to the express bus stops.

Two projects associated with East Link have been identified and included on the list: the intersection of 134<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE at NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street in the Bel-Red corridor to facilitate the rail crossing; and evaluating options for embedded trackways where the rail will run near or at grade.

One project identified by staff involves a proposed southbound HOV lane on the west side of Mercer Slough Park on Bellevue Way. The idea would be to carry the HOV lane down to I-90. Discussions with Sound Transit suggest that they would be responsible for the section from the park and ride entrance to the freeway; the northern portion would be a city project. Widening for the project would all be to the west, and the HOV lane would run in the middle of the roadway and connect to the HOV lane on I-90.

Commissioner Simas asked if there is any thinking that the HOV would eventually extend along Bellevue Way or 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Capital Programming Implementation Manager Eric Miller said the project as envisioned extends only to the Y. He said there has been talk of having an HOV facility extend further north at some future time.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. Miller said the TFP is a financially constrained plan. When it comes to the reality of funding the very large projects, more than likely they will be split into phases. The West Lake Sammamish Parkway project is one that is envisioned for phased implementation.

Commissioner Bishop asked if there would be any possibility of getting an LID formed for undergrounding utilities along West Lake Sammamish Parkway. He noted that historically the project included an evaluation of whether or not that should be done, but that element has apparently been scratched from the project description, which removes even the possibility of talking about it. Mr. Miller noted that the project description in fact did include reviewing and evaluating options for undergrounding utilities during the initial design phase process. That work did in fact occur. Mr. Krawczyk said undergrounding utilities is not funded as part of the roadway project, and to do so would require a separate funding approach. The formation of an LID would be one way to go.

Commissioner Jokinen suggested that given the city's current ability to fund transportation projects, undergrounding utilities is unlikely. While that may be preferable from an aesthetic viewpoint, the limited supply of transportation dollars need to be focused on projects that will actually move people and cars.

Commissioner Lampe asked at what phase of the project it would be appropriate to determine

if the public has a high enough interest in undergrounding utilities such that they would be willing to participate in an LID. Mr. Miller said there are a lot of factors that apply to undergrounding, not the least of which is gaining agreement from all parties involved, including the city, the public and Puget Sound Energy. There are specific costs associated with connecting each residence to the undergrounded powerline, which adds a complicating factor.

Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the LID petition process cannot be done without preliminary cost estimates, and preliminary cost estimates cannot be determined unless undergrounding is included in the project description.

Mr. Krawczyk said the private property owners could work with Puget Sound Energy in forming an LID that would not involve the city at all. Under that approach, however, it would be far more expensive for individual property owners. If an LID were to be formed in conjunction with the city's roadway project, however, the LID would not cover all of the costs and the city's portion would need to be funded in the CIP. The costs can be determined, but the issue is figuring out how to pay for them remains.

Mr. Ingram said not all projects fit in the roadway/intersection and ped-bike categories. The projects in the "other" category include boulevard treatments on 150<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE between SE 28<sup>th</sup> Street and SE 38<sup>th</sup> Street; the Mountains-to-Sound missing links from Factoria Boulevard to Lakemont Boulevard; an inline transit loading center on Factoria Boulevard just north of SE 34<sup>th</sup> Street; and evaluation of options for rebuilding the street corridor areas impacted by the East Link cut and cover tunnel on Main Street between 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, and on 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE between Main Street and NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, and NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street from 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to I-405. Mr. Ingram said the embedded trackway project should be added to the "other" category as well.

Mr. Ingram said staff was in the process of developing the ped-bike project list. Some preliminary projects will be ready to be shared at the open house, and input from the Commission will be sought at a future meeting. From the ped-bike plan, a project has been envisioned that involves widening the sidewalk on the east side of Bellevue Way adjacent to Mercer Slough Park. The project is not shown as a high priority in the ped-bike plan, but because East Link will follow the route, staff believes the project should be given another look.

The smaller scale pedestrian projects of a million or less will be evaluated through a separate process. In the past they have been called neighborhood sidewalk projects, and their evaluation will occur on a somewhat slower timeline, though the public will be able to comment on them at the open house events.

The online survey will go live on February 20 and will provide people opportunity to offer input. The four open house events will occur at Crossroads Shopping Center, Factoria Mall, City Hall and Highland Community Center.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if the survey could include asking people how they travel, what considerations go into make their travel decisions, and what they would use if they could. Mr. Ingram said he could draft questions along those lines for the survey. He noted that a transit survey will be done in conjunction with the launch of the transit plan update, so the two surveys will be cross promoted to the extent possible.

Mr. Miller noted said the intent is for staff to have the ranked scoring for the roadway/intersection projects by the Commission's March meeting. A second meeting in March may be necessary to review the ped-bike projects and to review for a second time the roadway/intersection projects. The initial submittal of projects to the Budget One process is due May 1 and a second meeting in March could give the Commission the necessary time to provide input with regard to which projects should be submitted to the budget process.

#### C. Downtown Transportation Plan Update: City Council's Planning Principles

Senior Planner Kevin McDonald informed the Commissioners that in October the City Council discussed the staff-drafted planning principles. Council offered some input and directed staff to seek input from the Commission, which was also accomplished in October. The principles, which have been approved, are important in that they set expectations for the community and guide the work. The principles call for the development of plans that will facilitate multimodal travel to and within the downtown sufficient to serve the projected 2030 travel demand. The downtown plan is to support the adopted vision for downtown Bellevue as a walkable urban mixed use area. The principles acknowledge the progress and planning that has been done since the 2004 adoption of the downtown subarea plan. The principles call for a robust public involvement process. The project list that results from the work must provide for multimodal mobility and must be fundable. Both qualitative and quantitative measures of effectiveness are to be employed.

In reviewing the principles on February 6, the Council made a couple of small changes. They directed that parking is to be considered as a component of downtown mobility, and they stressed the need to consider additional planning work done since the downtown subarea plan was adopted, including the Wilburton subarea planning process and the Eastgate/I-90 corridor study.

#### D. Downtown Transportation Plan Update: Downtown Subarea Plan and Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan

Mr. McDonald reminded the Commissioners that two walking audits were conducted in the downtown in December. The organization Feet First helped facilitate the audits with the community. Their report acknowledges the concept of creating a vibrant urban center where people can get around on foot and by bicycle. The key components of the report focus on facilities that help to connect neighborhoods; improving the health and fitness of residents and improving the environment by reducing pollutants from motorized vehicles; improving

mobility and transportation options; and designing facilities that are safe and which enhance business vitality.

The walking audit report highlights the fact that downtown Bellevue has wide streets and superblocks, both of which create challenges and opportunities. The sidewalk infrastructure is complete for the most part in the downtown, though there are some missing links. The sidewalks provide connections between different places in the downtown and their designs reflect the experience of the pedestrian. Pedestrians patronize the shops and services located along their walking routes, and it is a positive that there are an abundance of shops and services along the most popular walking routes in the downtown. Traffic volumes and aggressive drivers pose difficulties for pedestrians at times, but some design considerations can be utilized to improve safety. The downtown has a number of public open spaces, many of which exist as internal plazas located on through-block corridors; some design work could make it clear that the public is welcome to use the spaces. Pedestrian delay at intersections should be integrated with the vehicle delay at intersections.

Commissioner Simas asked if there are standards for pedestrian delay like there are for cars, or examples that can be looked to as best practices for maximizing the throughput of pedestrians as well as cars. Mr. McDonald said the answer to both of those questions is yes. An entire section of the measures of effectiveness deal with pedestrian mobility. Commissioner Simas asked if improving things for pedestrians necessarily makes things worse for vehicles and vice versa. Mr. McDonald suggested that the measures of effectiveness will help identify what the tradeoffs are for different projects. Hopefully it will not be a zero sum situation. The implementation of the SCATS system in the downtown has helped both pedestrians and vehicles to move around more efficiently and has improved the level of service for everyone.

Mr. McDonald said the recommendations from the walking audit also include looking at opportunities for additional midblock crossings, and designing them in a way that will make drivers more aware of them. Keeping the crossings clearly and brightly striped certainly is a must. The report also highlights the need to let the public know that through-block connections are open to the public by using wayfinding and utilizing design elements.

Commissioner Simas noted that often there is no street lighting associated with midblock crossing. He asked if the design of midblock crossings takes into account where existing streetlights are located, or where they should be located. Mr. McDonald said he is not familiar with the process but agreed the presence of or need for streetlights should be taken into account.

Mr. McDonald said the walking audit report includes the need for general education, both for drivers and pedestrians. The report noted that some driveway ramps prioritize cars over pedestrians and that better design could enhance the pedestrian experience. The materials used are critical; brick and utility covers both tend to be slippery when wet. The integration of pedestrian facilities with the East Link project is needed, and where the downtown plan is

concerned the focus will be primarily on walking and bicycling access to the stations.

With regard to the downtown transportation projects, Mr. McDonald noted that the complete project list, along with the status for each project, had been included in the Commission packet. The work ahead will involve removing from the list all projects that have already been completed, then deciding which of the remaining projects should be kept as described, which should be modified, and which should be removed and/or replaced with projects that are more suitable to the current and anticipated mobility needs.

There are projects outside of the downtown that are needed to support mobility within the downtown. A couple of them deal with I-405. While the freeway is not Bellevue's responsibility, having the projects on the list allows the city to advocate for them with the responsible agencies.

The ped-bike plan was adopted in 2009 and to date not much has been done to implement the projects related to the downtown. One project on NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street is partially complete and includes a 20-foot-wide multipurpose pathway on the north side of the bridge that crosses I-405 between 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. A couple of the projects for the area to the south of the downtown have been mostly completed, including a wide outside lane on Bellevue Way that provides bicyclists some cushion and which was created during the overlay of the roadway without widening the curb-to-curb distance, and a project on 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.

While there remain some gaps in the downtown sidewalk system, many have been filled. A number of the remaining gaps will be addressed as development occurs. Updating the downtown plan may identify some gaps important enough to be recommended for inclusion on the publicly funded project list.

Mr. McDonald said the community input will lead to project ideas, as will the operation analysis of the downtown transportation system and the travel demand modeling. Observations and suggestions from the Commission will also be relied on. All of the project ideas will be subjected to the measures of effectiveness.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bishop, Mr. McDonald said the work to develop the list of roadway projects for the downtown has not yet been started, primarily because the operational analysis and travel demand modeling has not been done.

Commissioner Bishop said he had heard something about a project that would utilize a tunnel on NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street to facilitate commercial truck and commuter access to downtown properties. Mr. McDonald said the concept was raised by the Building Owners and Managers Association and has briefly been discussed by the Council.

## 9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Bruce Nurse, Vice President for Kemper Development Company specializing in transportation, agreed with the need to light or otherwise make drivers aware of pedestrian crossings for safety reasons. He pointed out that unlike ten years ago, a pedestrian can walk from NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street between Bellevue Way and 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE under cover and through buildings all the way to NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street, a distance of some six blocks. He commented that TFP project 172, the one-way couplet idea, has been around for 15 years or so; it has been reviewed numerous times and has been modeled, and should be eliminated from the list. TFP project 190, the NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street improvements, has wording that is disconcerting. The street is intended to be one of the east-west streets connected to I-405; Main Street will not be one of those connections as a nod to preserving the southerly neighborhoods. TFP project 211, the extension of NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, is of prime importance, particularly if made a multimodal facility. TFP project 197, NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street overpass of I-405, is important in that it will connect the downtown to 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. He handed out a printout of comments regarding the Council principles for the Commissioners to consider. He highlighted the sixth principle and the reference to “other community stakeholders” and asked if the staff or the Commission has in mind how the phrase is to be interpreted. He thanked the Commission for its effort to update the downtown plan and suggested that the larger ideas, such as underground use of the Pedestrian Corridor, should have a placeholder of some type for future study. He voiced concern that Sound Transit may, for their own convenience, go right down the middle of NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, thus closing the door on the opportunity to have the underground use.

Mr. Linden Haywood, 1625 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, referred to the Factoria trail and said it has four signs, the format for which is inconsistent with the ones in Seattle and Redmond. The signs try to deal with both pedestrians and cyclists. The signs coming from the south identify the trail as the I-90 trail, whereas coming from the north the signs identify the trail as the 124<sup>th</sup> trail. The I-90 trail sign points straight into a wall. There are bollards in the middle of the trail that are painted dark green and which are completely invisible when it is dark. There are no indications regarding how the Factoria trail links up with the I-90 trail. At the junction with Richards Road and SE 36<sup>th</sup> Street there are no facilities to indicate how bicycles can use the junction. A kiosk has been installed, but it is nothing more than a blank canvas for graffiti artists. Too many little things that cost very little have been badly done, and that leads to criticisms of the engineers and their ability to put in bicycle facilities. The city would benefit from appointing a ped-bike committee.

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 14, 2011

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Larrivee. Second

was by Commissioner Lampe and the motion carried unanimously.

B. December 8, 2011

The minutes were not discussed, and no action taken to approve them.

13. REVIEW COMMISSION CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commissioners reviewed the list of upcoming agenda items and meeting dates.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 8:56 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary to the Transportation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date